

Strategy – Tighten the Requirements for a Motorcycle Operators Permit to Insure Riders Are Demonstrating Rider Skills on Shorter Time Frame.

General Description

The popularity of motorcycles as a mode of transportation and recreation in North Carolina and across the United States has exploded. Motorcycle registrations in North Carolina have increased from 65,247 in 1994 to 145,468 in 2004. Unfortunately, the number of motorcycle fatalities has also increased from 68 in 1994 to 134 in 2004. This increase in fatalities is unacceptable and has occurred despite increased rider training in the state. Many factors lead to motorcycle fatalities and injuries, including rider training, appropriate safety gear, alcohol use, speed, driver inattention, passenger car error, etc. All riders need to properly prepare themselves to ride including appropriate training, demonstration of riding skills and the wearing of safety gear.

The current “permit system” allows riders to get a permit by taking a 25 question written test, a vision test and a sign test at DMV. This permit allows a rider to ride with no other restriction than to not carry a passenger. This permit is good for 18 months and may be renewed at the end of 18 months. Requirements to be eligible for a permit under G.S. 20-7 (a2) are:

- (1) A person who is at least 16 years old but less than 18 years old and has a full provisional license issued by the Division.
- (2) A person who is 18 years old and has a license issued by the division.

Under (1) a person can get the full provisional 16 ½ years of age and by taking the written test be able to ride, without demonstrating any physical riding skills, a motorcycle capable of speeds in excess of 150 MPH!! Under (2) anyone with a regular driver’s license can do the same. This is not meeting the original intent of this law. The original law was legislated under lobbying by the Motorcycle Dealers Association to meet the need of persons who wanted to ride, but lacked the skills to pass a DMV riding skills test to get their endorsement. They said without the endorsement they could not legally ride to learn these skills, and the option of taking a rider training class at the community colleges was a class availability problem. The courses taught in the community colleges by the NC Motorcycle safety Education program often had backlog time to get in a class of over three months. By taking the NCMSEP training they learn the skills in a controlled environment with professional trainers, and receive a waiver of the DMV riding skill tests after successful completion of the course. Under this law we are allowing persons to ride on our streets and highways for up to 3 years without proving they have the necessary skills to do so safely.

In order to correct this situation we would like to propose that the permit system be revised to allow a one year non-renewable permit by taking the DMV written test if they have held a valid NC drivers license for two years or more. Individuals with less than two years valid drivers license will be required to successfully complete the NC Motorcycle Safety Education Program. Individuals less than 18 years of age would be required to take and successfully complete the NC Motorcycle Safety Education Program course. The young individuals are still learning to master the skills required to drive a passenger car on our streets and highways, and do not need the added complication of learning to ride a vehicle that requires another set of skills entirely in the presence of other vehicular traffic. This allows an individual a full year, which encompasses 8-10 months of riding weather and a full year option to enroll in a NCMSEP course. The successful implementation of this legislation will result in better skilled motorcyclists. Motorcyclist will be safer on each and every trip and law enforcement will be able to better enforce a very important traffic safety law.

Technical Attributes

Target	New riders entering the sport and existing riders whom have not demonstrated proper riding skills and do not have a motorcycle endorsement on their driver's license.
Expected Effectiveness	That by requiring riders to demonstrate the minimum required skills to safely ride a motorcycle in order to get an endorsement we can reduce the number unskilled riders and consequently the numbers of crashes, injuries and fatalities involving motorcycles.
Keys to Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of clear requirements for getting a permit and within 12 months a full endorsement. • Coordination between law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, legislatures and the courts that this directive has been issued to strengthen the permit/endorsement system. • Public education involving news and print media. • Education of motorcyclists, motorcycle dealers, and potential motorcycle buyers of the requirements to get a permit/endorsement.
Potential Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passage of legislation to change current law. Resistance from dealers who lobbied for the original permit system.
Appropriate Measures and Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in the compliance rates of riders and reduced crashes, injuries and fatalities.
Associated Needs	Mutual understanding and cooperation between the key players; DMV, enforcement, motorcyclists, dealers, and the judicial system.
Organizational, Institutional, and Policy Issues	Close working arrangements among traffic law enforcement, courts, and motorcycle dealers need to be in place. In many areas, cooperation between different police agencies (local police department, state highway patrol and/or sheriff's department) may be required.
Issues Affecting Implementation Time	Early involvement of all stakeholders is a must. They should have as much warning as possible that the current requirements have been clarified and defined.
Costs	Implementation time will only be affected by the time required to draft the proper legislation and then dependent upon the successful passage of such legislation.
Training	Cost for this strategy should be minimal.
	There will be a need to inform law enforcement officers of the new legislation and educate them on the importance of issuing citations for motorcyclist that do not comply with the law.
Legislative Needs	Passage of Legislation.